

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 02645 01 OF 03 150702Z
ACTION AF-05

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8702

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ADDIS ABABA 2645

LIMDIS

DEPT PASS HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINS, PDIP, ET, US
SUBJECT: PRESENT STATE OF US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2165

SUMMARY: THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FOR BETTER OR WORSE IN US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS SINCE THIS TIME LAST MONTH, WHEN THE PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA (PMGSE) SIGNALLED ITS DESIRE FOR BETTER RELATIONS BY GRANTING AGREEMENT TO NEW US AMBASSADOR. BUT ETHIOPIAN CAMPAIGN TO FRIGHTEN US INTO NOT ENTERING INTO ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMALIA IS STEPPING UP. THIS IS THE CRITICAL ISSUE, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN, AND STILL COULD LEAD TO A BREAK IN RELATIONS, PARTICULARLY IF WE ARE UNSUCCESSFUL IN STOPPING MATERIAL SOMALI SUPPORT FOR REBELLION IN THE OGADEN. PMGSE WILL ALSO RESORT TO LIES AND THREATS IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET US TO RESTRAIN CONSERVATIVE ARABAS FROM ASSISTING ERITREAN SECESSIONISTS. AT SAME TIME, PMGSE IS ALSO TRYING TO PERSUADE US OF ITS GOOD FAITH ON COMPENSATION ISSUE. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IS A
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 02645 01 OF 03 150702Z

GROWING PLUS IN OUR RELATIONS, BUT THE PLACE OF DEVELOPMENT AID HAS STILL NOT BEEN DECIDED ON BY PMGSE. WE SHOULD KEEP OUR OPTIONS OPEN. ON BALANCE, HUMAN RIGHTS IS BECOMING LESS OF A BILATERAL ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

1. US-SOMALI RELATIONS. (A) THE ETHIOPIANS ARE

GREATLY CONCERNED ABOUT MILITARY EQUIPMENT OF ANY SORT FROM ANY SOURCE REACHING SOMALIA. THEY THUS HAVE LITTLE PATIENCE OR UNDERSTANDING OF THE US PROPOSAL TO EXAMINE THE POSSIBLE SALE OF LIMITED AMOUNTS OF DEFENSIVE MATERIAL TO SOMALIA. FONMIN FELEKE TOLD DAS HARROP JUNE 2 THAT THIS ISSUE COULD CAUSE A DETERIORATION IN US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS. SHOULD IT PROVE POSSIBLE FOR THE USG TO PERSUADE THE SOMALI GOVT NOT TO SUPPORT SOMALI DISSIDENTS IN THE OGADEN, WE CAN EXPECT FEW EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION FROM THE PMGSE, WHO WOULD CONSIDER SUCH A RESULT SIMPLY A MATTER OF JUSTICE.

(B) FOREGOING WRITTEN PRIOR TO MENGISTU WARNING TO US THAT HE MIGHT BREAK RELATIONS IF USG SUPPLIES WEAPONS TO SOMALIA (ADDIS ABABA 2631). WE STILL FEEL MENGISTU REALIZES MAINTAINING RELATIONS WITH US IS IN ETHIOPIA'S LONG-TERM INTERESTS AND THAT WE ARE SUFFICIENTLY INTERESTED IN ETHIOPIA TO TAKE HIS WARNING SERIOUSLY. HOWEVER, HE IS STILL UNDER PRESSURE FROM STRONGLY ANTI-US ELEMENTS IN DIRG, IS NOT ENTIRELY FREE AGENT, AND MAY HAVE TO CARRY OUT HIS THREAT.

2. ERITREA. THE ETHIOPIANS WOULD LIKE THE USG TO EXERT ITS INFLUENCE WITH THOSE ARAB COUNTRIES SUPPLYING MILITARY MATERIAL TO THE ERITREAN REBELS AND END THAT TRAFFIC. US MILITARY RELATIONS WITH SOME ARAB
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PAGE 03 ADDIS 02645 01 OF 03 150702Z

COUNTRIES WHICH DO PROVIDE THE ERITREANS WITH MILITARY MATERIAL (E.G. SAUDI ARABIA, SUDAN) ADDS TO ETHIOPIAN SUSPICIONS OF A USG ROLE IN DIRECT OR INDIRECT SUPPORT OF THE ERITREANS. SPORADICALLY, THESE SUSPICIONS COME TO THE SURFACE AS THEY DID MOST RECENTLY ON JUNE 7 WHEN MENGISTU IN A LOW-KEY ALLUDED TO "60 US ADVISORS DEPLOYED ON OUR BORDERS TO TRAIN ERITREAN SEPARATIST GROUPS." WE HAVE ASKED THE PMGSE FOR CLARIFICATIONS OF THE ACCUSATION AND CATEGORICALLY DENIED IT. BASED ON OUR EXPERIENCE WITH SIMILAR ACCUSATIONS THAT USG WAS SUPPLYING ARMS TO SOMALIS DURING SOMALI OCCUPATION OF LARGE AREA OF OGADEN, WE DOUBT VERY MUCH THAT PMGSE WILL MAKE AN ATTEMPT TO DOCUMENT ITS FALSE CHARGES.

3. COMPENSATION FOR NATIONALIZED US PROPERTY. (A)
FONMIN FELEKE CLEARLY TOLD DAS HARROP JUNE 2 THAT THE PMGSE WAS IN PRINCIPLE WILLING TO PAY COMPENSATION

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE COLLECTIVE.

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 02645 02 OF 03 150738Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 ADDIS ABABA 2645

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AND EXPRESSED INTEREST IN NOT LETTING THE ISSUE EX-
ACERBATE OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. AMONG THE REASONS
CITED BY FELEKE TO HARROP FOR DELAY, HE EVIDENTLY
FAILED TO CITE ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT--THE PRESENT
INABILITY OF THE PMGSE TO COME UP WITH THE FUNDS TO
PAY US AND OTHER CLAIMS. WE KNOW OF A CASE INVOLVING
A PMGSE DEPT OF \$12 MILLION TO AN ITALIAN FIRM,
WHICH DESPITE A JUDICIAL FINDING AGAINST THE PMGSE
FOR THE FULL AMOUNT PLUS COSTS, THE LATTER IS TRYING
TO SETTLE WITH APPEALS TO THE ATALIAN EMBASSY ON
THE BASIS OF A PARTIAL PAYMENT. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT
THE PMGSE BELIEVES THAT THE ADMINISTRATION COULD
AVOID THE STRINGENCY OF US LAWS ON EXPROPRIATION/
COMPENSATION IF THE USG WERE REALLY INTERESTED IN
WORKING WITH THE PMGSE DURING ITS PRESENT DIFFICUL-
TIES.

(B) IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT, WE RECEIVED A
NOTE FROM MOFA JUNE 13 SIGNED BY FONMIN FELEKE ENCLOS-
ING A CHECK FOR APPROXIAMTELY US \$4,000 TO SETTLE US
CLAIMS DATING FROM MARCH 1977 FOR FIREBOMB DAMAGE
CAUSED TO THE FORMER USIS BUILDING. HE AND HIS ASSO-
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 02645 02 OF 03 150738Z

CIATES CAN BE COUNTED ON TO POINT THIS OUT AS EVIDENCE

THAT PMGSE IS DESIROUS OF LIVING UP TO OBLIGATIONS AND THAT COMPENSATION FOR NATIONALIZED US ASSETS WILL BE SETTLED AS SOON AS COMPENSATION COMMISSION'S MACHINERY CAN COMPLETE COMPLICATED STUDY. GIVEN MEAGERNESS OF THAT BUREAUCRACY PLUS ENORMITY OF CLAIMS FROM ITALIAN AND DOMESTIC INTERESTS, WE, OF COURSE, FORESEE THAT IT WILL TAKE QUITE A WHILE FOR PROCESS TO GAIN MOMENTUM. EMBASSY, INCIDENTALLY, KNOWS OF NO COMMITMENT FROM PMGSE TO GIVE PRIORITY TO US CLAIMS, AS A RECENT AID VISITOR FROM WASHINGTON SUGGESTED.

4. ETHIOPIAN RELIEF ASSISTANCE REQUEST. ALTHOUGH SPARINGLY PUBLICIZED WITHIN ETHIOPIA, US RELIEF ASSISTANCE IS WIDELY RECOGNIZED AND APPRECIATED WITHIN PMGSE, PARTICULARLY AT WORKING LEVELS, AND BY RECIPIENTS. PMGSE RELIEF COMMISSION(RRC), WHICH HAS COORDINATED IN EXCESS OF US \$30 MILLION IN FOOD AND OTHER EMERGENCY AID FROM USG OVER PAST FOUR YEARS, REMAINS MOST RELAXED, COOPERATIVE MINISTERIAL LEVEL ELEMENT. RRC TREATMENT OF US RELIEF ASSISTANCE AS RELATIVELY UNPOLITICIZED HUMANITARIAN GESTURE AS PERMITTED FAIR DEGREE OF US ACCESS AND TRAVEL, IF NOT INFLUENCE, WHICH WE MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE HAVE HAD. WITH EXCEPTION OF POTENTIAL PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH PROPOSED ASMARA FOOD AIRLIFT (ADDIS ABABA 2560) WE SEE CONTINUED USG RESPONSE TO CLEAR EMERGENCY RELIEF REQUIREMENTS SUCH AS WOLLO/TIGRE FAMINE THREAT AS NOT ONLY HIGHLY ACCEPTABLE TO PMGSE, BUT WELCOMED BY SUPPORTEES BEREFT OF OTHER POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS. UNLESS BILATERAL DONOR RELIEF EFFORT UNDERGOES A MAJOR SHIFT (I.E. EXTENSIVE NEW SOVIET OR EASTERN BLOC AID TO OGADEN VICTIMS, WOLLO OR ERITREA), WE BELIEVED RESPONSIVE USG RELIEF ASSISTANCE

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PAGE 03 ADDIS 02645 02 OF 03 150738Z

TANCE ROLE IS, ON BALANCE, A SIGNIFICANT PLUS.

5. UNSIGNED USAID DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS. (A) THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO BE GAINED FROM SIGNING AND GETTING STARTED ON PENDING USAID DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS (I.E. UPPER DIDESSA PROJECT, 663-0179) DO NOT AT THE MOMENT OUTWEIGH THE PMGSE'S IDEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED CONCERN NOT TO GIVE ANY SIGNAL THAT IT IS REENTERING INTO A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH US. (B) COMPLIMENTARY TO THAT VIEW IS THE WIDELY HELD ONE IN THE DIRG THAT THE US CANNOT BE TRUSTED TO GIVE AID TO A COUNTRY WHICH HAS OFFICIALLY ADOPTED THE MARXIST-LENINIST PHILOSOPHY. BOTH THE CHARGE AND USAID DIRECTOR WERE TOLD SEPARATELY BY HIGH OFFICIALS THAT SIGNING OF UPPER DIDESSA WAS BEING HELD UP INDEFINITELY FOR THAT VERY REASON. THEY WERE TOLD BY

THE SAME OFFICIALS THAT DIRG MEMBERS CITE OUR DECISION TO ABSTAIN THA THREATS TO VOTE NO IN THE IDLI'S ON COMPENSATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS GROUNDS AS PROOF POSITIVE THAT WE WILL OFFER AID WITH ONE HAND AND TAKE IT AWAY WITH OTHER FOR EXPRESS PURPOSE OF DISCREDITING PMGSE.

(C) IT IS ALSO OF PERHAPS EQUAL IMPORTANCE TO NOTE THAT ALL SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS IN ETHIOPIA TODAY ARE BEING TAKEN ON A HIGH LEVEL, AND

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 02645 03 OF 03 150748Z

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CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00 IO-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 ADDIS ABABA 2645

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THAT SENIOR DECISION MAKERS ARE FULLY OCCUPIED WITH MORE PRESSING EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL THREATS. DESPITE THE SERIOUS INCONVENIENCE THE LENGTHY DELAY IN SIGNING HAS CAUSED, AND THE LACK OF ANY IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS FOR SIGNATURE, WE BELIEVE EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO KEEP THE OFFER PENDING. SHOULD THE PRESENT POINT OF VIEW OF THE PMGSE TOWARD THE USG EVOLVE IN A MORE FAVORABLE DIRECTION, IT WOULD BE TO OUR ADVANTAGE TO HAVE READY A MEANS OF RESPONDING. IF UPPER DIDESSA PROJECT MUST BE WITHDRAWN BECAUSE OF OUR OWN BUREAUCRATIC IMPERATIVES, WE SHOULD NOTIFY PMGSE WELL AHEAD OF THE TIME LIMIT TO BE IMPOSED FOR SIGNING. WE SHOULD AT ALL COSTS TRY TO AVOID SITUATION WHICH OCCURRED LAST SEPTEMBER WHEN WE FOUND OUT THAT AID HAD TRANSFERRED FUNDS TO PROJECTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES JUST AS PMGSE SEEMED READY TO SIGN HERE.

6. THE CUBAN PRESENCE. THE PMGSE IS DEFENSIVE AND SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSED BY ITS NEED TO HAVE RECOURSE TO FOREIGN TROOPS. THE PMGSE STILL GIVES EVERY INDIVIDUAL
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 02645 03 OF 03 150748Z

CATION THAT IT WILL SEEK A MILITARY SOLUTION TO THE ERITREAN SECESSION WITH CUBAN/SOVIET ASSISTANCE. AS LONG AS THE PMGSE COUNTS ON A MILITARY SOLUTION, IT WILL HAVE TO DEPEND ON CUBAN/SOVIET DIRECT AND MATERIAL SUPPORT. (TO WHAT EXTENT IT CAN COUNT ON DIRECT CUBAN TROOP SUPPORT IS PROBLEMATIC.) UNTIL ETHIOPIAN DEPENDENCE ON CUBAN SUPPORT DIMINISHES, EITHER BY A QUASI-TOTAL MILITARY VICTORY IN ERITREA, OR A CHANGE IN THE PMGSE'S POSITION RE A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT, US CRITICISM OF THE CUBAN/SOVIET PRESENCE IN ETHIOPIA WILL PROVOKE A STRONG ETHIOPIAN REACTION AND PROVE TO BE AN IRRITANT IN OUR RELATIONS. WE CANNOT EXPECT PMGSE TO UNDERSTAND OUR DISTINCTION BETWEEN CRITICIZING EXTRA-AFRICAN MILITARY FORCES IN AFRICA AND RECOGNIZING AFRICAN COUNTRIES' SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO CALL FOR SUCH EXTRA-AFRICAN ASSISTANCE.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS. THERE HAS BEEN NO RECRUDESCENCE OF THE PMGSE DIRECTED "RED TERROR" CAMPAIGN IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS. BRUTAL AS IT WAS, IT MAY ALSO HAVE SERVED ITS PURPOSE IN STAMPING OUT THE "WHITE TERROR" IT WAS INTENDED TO. IF SO, PMGSE'S PERCEIVED NEED TO RESORT TO SUCH MEASURES HAS DISAPPEARED AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT SOME LIMITED NUMBER OF ARRESTS ON POLITICAL GROUNDS ARE STILL TAKING PLACE. THE GENERAL SECURITY ATMOSPHERE IN ADDIS ABABA IS, HOWEVER, CONSIDERABLY MORE RELAXED THAN IT WAS EVEN A MONTH AGO. SHOULD THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ETHIOPIA BE COMMENTED ON BY USG SPOKESMEN, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE WIDELY-PUBLICIZED EXCESSES, WHICH DEEPLY TARNISHED THE PMGSE, APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN A PASSING PHASE. THIS TREND MIGHT BE REINFORCED BY APPROPRIATE NOTICE BEING GIVEN TO THIS
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PAGE 03 ADDIS 02645 03 OF 03 150748Z

IMPROVED SITUATION. INDISCRIMINATE BOMBING AND DESTRUCTION OF CIVILIAN POPULATIONS IN ERITREA IS, OF COURSE, A DISTINCT BUT RELATED ISSUE WHICH IS PROBABLY BOUND TO ATTRACT WESTERN IF NOT WORLD ATTENTION AND WHICH WILL TEMPERIZE ETHIOPIA'S IMPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS

RECORD. NEVERTHELESS, WE IN USG SHOULD KEEP DISTINC-
TION IN MIND.
MATHERON

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